2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

e. Women's work.

462 The women are constantly working. Getting up at cock-crow they pound paddy. When
512 day dawns, they plaster the court-yard with cowdung. Thereupon they draw and fetch
262 water. They next give the gruel that is left from the previous day to the men and children. When these have eaten, they themselves take food. Thereupon they make up fire and put the midday meal food on the fire; they cook the rice, make curry; they pin leaf-cups and leaf-plates, ladle out the cooked rice, and when it becomes noon, they give the men [283] and children their midday meal and afterwards eat themselves. From noon to the second time for drawing water (about 5 p.m.) they do different kinds of work, pluck vegetables, fetch leaves, and if they live near a forest, they go to fetch firewood, or they clear out the cotton seed in the carkhi[6], they clean the cotton with a bow[7], they make rolls of carded cotton on twigs, they spin on the spinning wheel, they wind the thread on their fingers, that the men may afterwards use it when weaving cloth. When it becomes the second time for drawing water, they go to fetch water, and then make preparations for the evening meal. Home two hours after it has become dark they eat. The women eat after the others. Meat they (i. e., all Santals) eat only now and then, mostly they eat cooked rice with vegetables and split peas. The spices for meat are turmeric, Anis seed, [263] garlic, oil, and salt. The spices for fish are turmeric and mithi[8], and oil and salt; for vegetables and split peas only salt. They talk together about different matters while inside, thereupon they lie down to sleep. At the time of sowing and harvesting the women plant rice, hoe the maize, and when the paddy is ripe, they reap it. At the time of Dasãe they make the house and door smooth: so there, this is the work of the women.

f. Children's work and amusements.

857 Until they are able to tend cattle, small boys only run about and play. When they be-
233 come fit for being cattle-herds, they tend cattle, also sheep and goats, together with the other village boys. In the morning they let the cattle out, and they tend them, two or [234] three companions going together. They blow the flute, they hunt birds. At noon they [223] take the cattle to a place where they rest, that they may themselves get food. When they have eaten, they drive the cattle out to graze, and when it becomes evening, they bring 234 the cattle to the village and take them in. At noon grown-up people milk the cows; they give the milk to the children; what is left they keep and add to it day after day and make clarified butter of it. To make clarified butter they boil the milk; having boiled it they let it become curds; these they churn mixed with water; thereupon they skim off the

[6] See Dictionary s. v. [7] This bow is now fairly rare. It is made of bamboo; at one end, the end kept in the right hand, it is compact; the rest is split and bent and a caigut string is fixed so as to make it a bow. It is worked putting the bow-string down in the cotton and "playing" this with the thumb and index-finger of the left hand. [8] Trigonella Foenum-Graecum, L.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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mahajans and many of us run to the tea-gardens to earn a living.'"

Statistics sheds further light on the condition of the cattle, the mainstay of an agricultural population. "A large section of the aborigines consisting of the Santals, and the Bhumijs, and forming about 50 per cent of the population, do not care for milk as an item of nutrition. This perhaps contributes to a certain extent to their indifference to the improvement of cattle. Even as beasts of burden or as instruments of husbandry, the cattle in the state are very poor in quality.'" So depending on such ricketty props, they can only turn out paddy and thereafter "biri" (*mug* pulse), in pathetic ignorance of supplementary means of livelihood like cottage-industries.

Little wonder that with such limited means of livelihood and scanty fare as we have already noticed they offer little resistance to intoxication. Their wants and worries weigh upon them so much that they take to drunken forgetfulness to drown their

1 Ref. *Census Report of Mayurbhanj*, 1931, p. 10, which reads "During the last decade 1,497 coolies belonging to this State were recruited for work in the tea-gardens by the garden-sirdars."

2 There are in all 600,000 heads of cattle in the State (Total population 8089,603) page 71 *Census Report* of Mayurbhanj, 1931.

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for their timber. The *sarjom*, which predominates, is a valuable tree, but locally it has not been permitted to grow to any height. The trees are cut once in seven years and the timber is exported chiefly to supply firewood in the towns, while the leaf is used for the leaf plates required in city homes and food shops. This activity provides the main subsidiary occupation and is in full swing whenever work in the fields slackens, though it is not sufficient to keep the Santals at home throughout the year. Women share in the occupation; they help the men by stacking the timber as it is cut into lengths, and they collect the leaves which older women sew together while sitting at home. Other women, in the time they can spare from duties at home, collect the twigs and dry branches which they need for domestic fuel. Boys from about the age of seven are engaged in their occupation of tending the village herd of goats and cattle, for which they receive wages from the owners of one anna per month for each goat and two annas per month for each head of cattle in their charge. They are sometimes joined by the younger girls, but after the girls are nine or ten they stay with their mothers, look after the house or help to nurse the younger children.

Women play little or no part in the organization of social or religious life, but they are supreme in household affairs. Although men lay claim to superior intelligence and women openly disclaim any knowledge or interest in affairs outside the home circle, the attitude of the two groups towards each other is one of good-natured tolerance. In Barikul, at the close of a festival when there had been much drinking, the men were feeling unwell. Babulal reports: "Some of the men are saying: 'Yesterday I had nothing to eat, so give me something today.' To which the women reply: 'We have eaten all the food; you men are drunk!' And so they drank more beer and spirits, and became even more drunken than they had been the day before." In his diary entry for the next day he records: "Today all the drunks have begun to beg for some stale rice gruel. The women scolded them: 'You have earned a lot of food, haven't you? Why should you not go out to beg?' " After this chaffing the women relented and gave the men some food before they set out once more to their work. The Santal wife attends fairs and markets; she buys her own clothes and attends to the household shopping. The contrast between them and their non-Santal neighbours is heightened by the fact that they do not cover their heads. One end of the *sari* is thrown loosely across the breasts and over the left shoulder.

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sand on the pathways becomes unbearably hot for our feet. Pigs were killed at dawn, cut, and the meat was roasted first thing so that it would be ready when the people returned home. The day turned out to be very warm. Some men went into the village of G—— because of their thirst to get a drink of beer, and they said: 'One pice worth of beer from G—— is as good as six pice of beer from that other place.' " The market is the main shopping centre for the villagers. There are cloth stalls and stalls of imported trinkets and ornaments. Potters, weavers, blacksmiths, purveyors of "medicines" and many others display their wares. The Santals may have grain for sale in a good year; they sell fowls and vegetables and buy their salt and cooking oil regularly, with other commodities at need. The market is a great place for the exchange of gossip, for meeting friends and relatives; it is here that many flirtations begin and matches are set in hand.

Nevertheless, the main business of the Santals' life, round which most of their activities centre, is to wrest from the poor soil the greatest possible amount of food. The struggle leaves little time for philosophizing, but they do sometimes crystallize in a phrase some bitter lesson from experience, as when they say: "Rain in the morning, like a friendship that is easily made, does not last." They work as hard as their social obligations allow. There is nothing distinctive in their methods of agriculture, and for generations they have been accustomed to settled cultivation and the use of the plough. The division of labour between men and women, the taboo against women handling the plough, they share with the surrounding culture. They observe the same propitious days and seasons for sowing and reaping as their neighbours. A great authority on the Santals has said:[1] "They are on their way to becoming agriculturalists, but are, as yet, far behind. . . . They have not as yet learnt the need for and the benefits of weeding and manuring, or of changing the crops, and much more. For example, they do not take proper care of their cattle. These are mostly herded by children, who use much of the time for their own games and pleasures. When the paddy is harvested, the cattle are permitted to roam about. A direct result of this is that it is impossible for people to have any crops standing after the middle of December or thereabouts; the cattle would

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, Pt. III, "How the Santals live", *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1940, Vol. X, No. 3, p. 434.

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[233]

eat all; and the Santals only very rarely fence anything in." The same statement could be applied to the backwardness of Indian peasant agriculture in general, and although it presents a recognizable picture it is somewhat unfair. It fails to take account of the formidable difficulties in the way of the Santals over which they have no control, and it ignores the fact that there is among them a fund of inherited practical wisdom and acquired skill of no mean order.

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they are touching the blue eggs of the *jihu* bird. The Hāsdāk' do not even touch a goose, and they will not take water from a tank in which geese or ducks are swimming at the time. Binu used to say that he had to perform four different sub-clan sacrifices. To two of the spirits pigs were sacrificed in the cowshed at the time of the *Sohrae*, to another spirit they sacrificed a goat in the house at the end of the *Sohrae*, and to the fourth they sacrificed a ram on the open land outside the village at the time of the Spring festival. The Kaṛwar Hāsdāk' tell the story of how long ago their ancestors were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and all the Hāsdāk' were present. They had performed the sacrifices and everyone had been served with rice and meat, but some of the younger folk present felt that they had not been given enough to eat, so they killed a buffalo and served that as well. The family of the one who slew the buffalo, or *kuḍa*, became known as Kaṛwar Hāsdāk'. They sacrifice a pig, a white hen and a brown hen at the time of the *Sohrae*; the rite is performed inside the house at sunset, and they must finish eating the flesh during the night, burying whatever is left over in the dung heap. The Hatibaṛi[1] Hāsdāk' sacrifice either a white hen or a ram to their sub-clan spirit. This should be done out in the open beside a white ant hill, but, like some others, they now bring a piece of earth from the ant hill into their cowshed. Like the Nij Maṛṇḍi, of whom this is also true, they may not be vaccinated, but their womenfolk may be tattooed.

The Jihu Hāsdāk' are not allowed to brand their cattle. There seems little reason to doubt the fact that most of the clans use distinctive marks in branding their cattle. Bodding has affirmed of the *dhera dag*, or cross, that although it is used as a mark of ownership of cattle "it is not restricted to any sept or sub-sept".[2] (The word "clan" has been adopted in this book in preference to "sept".) In the Bankura district, however, many of the branding marks are definitely associated with the clans, and the marks correspond to those recorded by Charulal Mukherjea in Mayurbhanj.[3] The marks printed on the opposite page have been noticed in Bankura.

The Guạ or Betel nut Hembrom constitute one of the most numerous of the Hembrom sub-clans. Of them it is said that "a few days after the ancestors had been divided into clans, one of the Hembrom was born at the foot of a betel nut tree. When he

[1] Literally "elephant house", but the name may refer to a locality.
[2] *Santali Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 272.
[3] Charulal Mukherjea, *The Santals*, p. 77.

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grew to manhood he became a very important person and his sons were known as Guạ Hembrom. From that time they gave up the chewing of the betel nut. The women may wear any kind of *sari* and they may wear shell bracelets. They do not eat eels. It is said that their ancestors were great traders, and once upon a time when they were going on a trading expedition they were halted by a flooded river. At that an eel ferried them over the river on his back, and since then the Guạ Hembrom will not eat eels. They sacrifice pigs at the *Sohrae*, also one white and one brown hen." Another member of this sub-clan was able to throw further light on the origin of the name: "We are Guạ Hembrom, and this is how we got our name. During the first wanderings, one day while the ancestors were out in the forest a child was born at the roadside. They wondered what they could find to tie

Rot Mạrndi - //

Hembrom - +

Nij Murmu - ⊻

Ṭika Murmu - ||

Sidup Soren - Z

round the waist of the new-born child in place of the string. It was growing dark, so they quickly cut down the stem of a creeper, not knowing what it was, and bound it round his waist. Next morning they say that there was a betel nut on the end of the stem, and so the Guạ Hembrom began." The Nij Hembrom, like others already noted, perform their sub-clan sacrifices in the cowshed at the time of the *Sohrae*, with a piece of earth from a white-ant hill for the altar. It is set up in one of the corners. Another of their sacrifices is performed in the same month and has certain unusual features. No preparations may be made until after the sun has set and all the participants have already taken their usual evening meal, including the one who will perform the sacrifice. The rite is performed outside the village on a site that has been smoothed and plastered with cowdung. The person officiating draws a circle on the site with a paste made from flour and water. In it he first offers a red hen